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Greer Friedrich

*Graduate student at UNC Charlotte pursuing a Certificate of Applied Linguistics and Master of Arts in Liberal Studies*

Title

Sharing food: community meals and intercultural communication

Description

I would like to present a poster on my research project and paper that looks at how sharing meals has the ability to increase intercultural communication and build community, with a specific example and application to Charlotte, NC.

Abstract

This research paper explores the question of whether sharing food around a table increases intercultural communication and understanding, and if so, how this happens. A brief literature review examines how sitting down to meals together can be beneficial on multiple levels including improving areas such as health, academic achievement, and relational cohesiveness. This is due in part to the unique space that meals can create for linguistic and cultural communication and learning by giving participants a focused and shared activity of eating together. A discussion then follows on how answering these questions for the specific Charlotte, NC area could be significant given the city's low social mobility, which has highlighted significant inequalities along racial and socioeconomic lines. The example of the Knight Foundation's *On the Table* initiative is reviewed, including how it uses food to help bring people together for conversations in Charlotte. The paper concludes with a consideration of how hosting or creating additional group meals could be a tangible way to increase communication and understanding across diverse groups, which in turn has the potential to create and strengthen community in a transformative way.